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SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF DECEMBER ACTIVITIES AT AMEMBASSY
DJIBOUTI

SUMMARY: (U) This is a summary of the activities at Embassy Djibouti for the month of December.

DJIBOUTI-SOMALIA RELATIONS

Charge Tim Smith, AF/E Deputy Director Phil Carter and POLOff Erinn Reed met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary for Bilateral Relations, Miriam Gumaneh, regarding

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the Djibouti-Somalia relations, as well as, the current state of Djibouti-U.S. relations. Ms. Gumaneh described the actions of the Djiboutian government in the peace process for Somalia. Both parties agreed that Djibouti's role was important. Ms. Gumaneh stressed that Somalia needs to make its own agreement, but that Djibouti would be willing to act as a facilitator.

Mr. Carter assured Ms. Gumaneh that the U.S. position on Somalia was the same and questioned the feasibility of the process if the TNG did not participate. Mr. Carter addressed the U.S. stance on Somaliland/Somalia separation, saying that we would like to see the Somaliland region stay stable. He also stated that if the peace conference was a failure, the U.S. would have to rethink the policy on separation, but would follow the lead of the African Union. Ms. Gumaneh stated that if the two agreed to separate amicably, the African Union would support it.

IMF PANEL VISIT

The International Monetary Fund sent a panel of delegates to take stock of the program's progress. The panel met with Charge Tim Smith and POLOFF Erinn Reed at the Embassy December 10, 2003 to inquire about the monies given to the Djiboutian government by the U.S. Their main task was to reconcile the amount that the 2003 and 2004 Djiboutian budgets showed with the amounts reported from the U.S. organizations. The members of the IMF panel made it known to the Charge and the POLOff that Djibouti would need to show a strong track record in economic policy over the next years if it were to receive another IMF program.

The panel's visit ended with a Donors, meeting on December 13, 2003 to discuss the progress and plan for the IMF presence in Djibouti. POLOff Erinn Reed and the Econ Assistant attended the meeting. The meeting was focused on the implementation of a Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) and a review of the Djiboutian economic budget. The SMP is to be the mechanism through which the Djiboutian government can build a track record, after which the IMF will consider whether the country is sufficiently dedicated to policy reform to receive a Fund Financial Arrangement. The governments actions will be closely monitored by a permanent representative from the IMF here in Djibouti and several Article IV consultations.

DJIBOUTIAN OFFICIALS VISIT TO IRAN

President Ismail Omar Guelleh and several cabinet officials made a state visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The agenda was discussions of increased cooperation between the two governments. The IRI and Djibouti signed a number of memoranda on cooperation in the economic, industrial and mining sectors. The agreements emphasized the need for broadening the economic ties between the two countries, private and government sectors. Several programs to aid the Republic of Djibouti were also granted. A loan was granted for building a new office for the Djiboutian National Assembly and a commercial center. The Iranian Red Cross also promised to help in Djibouti's health program. In the education domain, Iran promised to grant scholarships to students majoring in computer science.

Discussions also included the African continent's conflicts, fighting and crisis. President Khatami complimented President Guelleh's effort in restoring of peace and stability in Somalia.

The two parties condemned the atrocities and violence of Sharon's government against Palestinian people. They also condemned those who try to distort the image of Islam. They also lashed out at any act of terrorism.

On Iraq issues, they reaffirmed the need to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity, national unity and called for withdrawal of occupiers from the country and led the people govern their own country.

The two leaders called for peaceful application of nuclear technology for all members of the NPT.

EXXON MOBIL'S CLAIM AGAINST THE DJIBOUTIAN JUDICIARY

This situation is ongoing; a full reporting cable will be submitted after the Djiboutian government takes action. In brief, the three major oil companies in Djibouti (ExxonMobil, Shell and Total) have several lawsuits pending in the courts. Fines have been tallied against the companies based on blatantly altered documents overturning previous appeals. The exemplars given to the Charge, in a meeting with ExxonMobil representative Alain Adam on December 10, 2003, showed portions of previous court documents whited-out and altered to reverse the decisions.

After visiting the Ministers of Justice and of the Presidency, the Government of Djibouti (GoD) has not taken any action other than to say there would be an investigation done internally at the Ministry of Justice. The attitude of the GoD is that this is a very serious issue and they would remedy it. However, in a meeting December 22, 2003 the Minister of the Presidency in charge of foreign investment seemed disinterested and the impression was that this problem would not be immediately fixed.

Embassy Djibouti has been reluctant to submit the National Trade Estimate reporting cable as a result of this flagrant misuse of justice. This suit would cause a severely negative change to the NTE if included. Embassy Djibouti relayed this fact to the Minister of the Presidency Osman, indicating that if no immediate action were taken to remedy this case there would be significant potential damage to the impression of the transparency of the government and the judiciary. Minister Osman replied that if we reported so negatively in this document we would be punishing the entire country for the actions of individuals.

JOINT CHIEFS/ROBIN WILLIAMS, VISIT TO CAMP LEMONIER ON RTD

Embassy Djibouti provided footage, photos and a press release to Radio-TV Djibouti of the Joint Chiefs of Staff/Robin Williams USO Christmas visit to Camp Lemonier. RTD aired a full three minutes of footage with staging that included the American Flag and a presentation to Williams by General Robeson. Response has been positive from the Djiboutian public.

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